Nolan McHale

Research Bibliography: Summary and Reaction

Vegetarian Options for School Lunch Programs. (2014). *Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine,* 1-12. Retrieved November 10, 2014, from http://pcrm.org/pdfs/health/School\_Lunch\_Guide.pdf

**Summary**: This guide was released by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. It discussed such things as vegetarian diets and children’s health, the USDA National School Lunch Program requirements, as well as advice for parents, new food options, and information about vegetarian nutrition and commodities. Pertaining to the lunch program requirements, the guide prescribes certain nutritional standards that should be met by the school. Most importantly is alternative protein sources for vegetarian students. For grades k-12, two ounces of alternate protein products, half a cup of dry beans or peas, four tablespoons of peanut or other nut butters, and an ounce of peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds. These are quantities mandated by the USDA for schools, and as the article notes, ‘schools using the newer Nutrient Standard Menu Planning are allowed even more creativity and flexibility in menu planning and can easily put vegetarian meals on their menus as long as they meet established nutrient levels.’ Because of this, the prescribed amounts of alternative protein sources are not actually as stringent as they seem. The school has some leeway in how they make these meals.

**Reaction:** This article was a reputable source that established clear guidelines for schools with regards to alternative sources of protein for vegetarian/vegan students. It was important to my research because it displayed the nutritional policies that schools must implement to meet USDA standards. Since my research focuses on the needs of students whose diets are based on ethical ideologies, this article was very relevant. It shows the mandated alternative protein sources which is critical in the diet of vegans and vegetarians who do not eat protein from animals. This article displays one example of how school policy is being shaped with regards to nutrition, and more specifically students with different ethical ideologies. It is important that these students are recognized and that their needs are met, and this article shows how government and school systems are implementing these changes in order to meet these needs.

Adolescent and Young Adult Vegetarianism: Better Dietary Intake and Weight Outcomes but Increased Risk of Disordered Eating Behaviors. Robinson-O'Brien, Ramona et al. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* , Volume 109 , Issue 4 , 648 – 655

**Summary:** The Journal of the American Dietetic Association performed a study in order to, ‘examine characteristics of current and former adolescent and young adult vegetarians and investigate the relationships between vegetarianism, weight, dietary intake, and weight-control behaviors’. What this study found was that young adults (such as school age children) were more erratic in their eating habits and more prone to binge eating in comparison to children of the same age and demographic who had never been vegetarian. Young adults who were new vegetarians were less likely than those who were never vegetarians to be overweight or obese however many former and current vegetarians said they were more likely to binge eat unhealthy foods than their meat-eating counterparts. The conclusion was that clinicians should factor in diets such as vegetarian diets when assessing risk for disordered eating behaviors.

**Reaction:** I was surprised to learn that many young vegetarians are at higher risked for disordered eating behaviors. I had assumed that young adults who are vegetarian are more disciplined in their eating habits because of their restrictions with food. I am quite interested in why this is the inverse of what I expected. It is unfortunate that there seems to be more unstable eating habits present amongst young vegetarians, however it is fortunate to see that these vegetarians tend not to be as overweight as their meat-eating counterparts. This has significance in relationship to school policy making. It would be beneficial for the school to be aware and mindful of the dietary risks some of their students are prone to that do not pertain to allergies. With this knowledge and awareness, schools could raise awareness about the binge eating risk factor for new vegetarians and vegans and offer guidance and tips to students on how to control binge eating.

“Island Grown Initiative”. (2014, December 5). Retrieved from http://islandgrownschools.org/

**Summary:** In 2007, a community non-profit known as *Island Grown Initiative* was launched by the small island community of Martha’s Vineyard. The program was launched with the intention of creating “a community non-profit dedicated to increasing the supply and demand of locally grown food on Martha’s Vineyard” (island). Soon though it became apparent that this community program could not only benefit the island business owners and home owners, but the school goers as well. In 2012, a ‘farmer to school’ program, *Island Grown Schools*, was launched to provide healthier locally grown foods to grades K-12 in the small island’s only school district. Through *Island Grown Schools,* Martha’s Vineyard became the first school district in Massachusetts to establish a ‘farmer to school’ program that provides locally grown produce to students K-12. The program also offers assistance to other states interest in adopting a similar model. The official website *islandgrownschools.org* has a stated desire to help spread this model to other school districts in Massachusetts and serves as the regional lead of the Cape and Islands Farm to School Network. *Island Grown Schools* official website offers a wonderful summation of their farm to school program, saying that “by sourcing our produce, meat and fish locally in school cafeterias, we help maintain the vibrant agricultural and fishing heritage of Martha’s Vineyard while paving the way for life-long healthy eating habits for our students” (islandgrown). Martha’s Vineyard is still using the farm to school program as of 2014.

**Reaction:** The *Island Grown Schools* program seems like an excellent way to combat the obesity and health issues many school age children are at risk for. In a country with the fifth highest child obesity rate in the world (behind Greece, Italy, New Zealand, and Slovenia), it is refreshing to see healthier produce offered to the school age children in the community. What is particularly refreshing is that this program helped Martha’s Vineyard school lunches meet a lot of healthy criteria. Lots of schools offer vegetarian options, some even vegan options, but this school district takes it a step further by offering local foods to students so come lunch time, Veg heads and locavores. This implemented program offers a great school food policy that is being adopted by other states to not only combat obesity, but to make healthy as well as local food options readily available to the community’s students.

Mortazavi, M. (2014). Consuming Identities: Law, School Lunches, and what it Means to be American. *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy,* *24*(1), 1-44. Retrieved December 5, 2014, from http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/

**Summary:** Cornell University’s journal gives an in-depth analysis of the National School Lunch Program and the factors that shape school lunch policy. Mortazavi discusses the power of agricultural lobbyists who ‘push’ certain produce according to the monetary needs of the market. What the author concludes is that often times, school lunch policies are not always molded around the health of school children, but the health of the market. In this way, food policy contains its own version of politics that has to be regulated. The journal mentions on page ten of its article that “The items required in a school meal certainly have nutritional value and are selected, in part, with nutritional values in mind. However, deciding what a “balanced” meal looks like in the school meal context cannot be divorced from the market pressure of the agricultural sector and the structure of agricultural subsidies” (Mortazavi 10). The article also mentions that though nutritional requirements in schools seem to be competing neck and neck with lobbyists, cultural and ethical considerations lag behind.

**Reaction:** This article is of the utmost relevance to my research. CU’s journal offers the big picture, that is, the critical factors that play a role in shaping school lunch policy. It is interesting to know that the demands of the agricultural market directly influence what’s on the lunch tray in schools across the United States, and alarming to find that the crops being ‘pushed’ are not always the healthiest. If school lunch revolves around profit, it may be overlooking the dietary needs of many students. For example, corn is one of the US’s biggest crops, so it comes as no surprise that corn is often present in school cafeteria food. If a student only ate organically grown produce, they may not be able to eat the majority of the foods being offered in their cafeteria. What I take away from the article is that school lunch policies should be shaped by the nutritional needs of the students, not by the wants of agricultural lobbyists. The journal even offers guidance as to how a more student-conscious menu could be developed for schools: “The USDA could create a database of qualifying recipes that reflected a broader array of American food traditions by soliciting recipes from various ethnic and racial communities. In a well-received local program, a Seattle school asked students and parents to submit recipes that reflected their culture in order to build a new school menu. In addition, other resources may prove useful in expanding school menu options. For example, several nonprofit groups, including the Physicians Committee For Responsible Medicine, have created materials that begin to tackle the task of creating school meals that meet USDA requirements without meat and sometimes without dairy” (Mortazavi 36).

Klein, B. (2010, October 15). Genetically Modified Foods and Their Risks to Our Children. Retrieved December 5, 2014, from http://www.nycgreenschools.org/

**Summary:** Klein’s op/ed article posted on *nycgreenschools.org* examined the potential health risks that GMOs pose to humans and, more specifically, school children who may be eating GMO containing foods inadvertently through their local school lunch program. Klein applauds New York parents for their recent efforts to get healthier, fresher food for their children in school. Nutrition in schools has been a hot topic since nutrition and schools, but as Klein points out, there have been significant changes in the food industry, and these changes may be hurting kids. He poses the question, “Is it merely coincidental that food allergies began to skyrocket in 1996, the same year GMOs were introduced into our food supply?” (Klein). The article goes on to discuss the increased risk that school-age children are at when it comes to the consumption of genetically modified organisms by citing independent research which concluded the dastardly effects these foods have on animals. “Young, fast-developing bodies are more susceptible than adult bodies to toxins.  The American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) has said that GM foods ‘pose a serious health risk’ and has called for a moratorium” (Klein). Klein ends the article by stressing the importance of parents raising awareness about GMOs and the high risk they pose to children. He also praises the house bill H.R. 6636, the Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act, which, if passed, will force food companies to label genetically modified foods as such.

**Reaction:** This article left me stunned. A good portion of the article is dedicated to citing the results of animal experiments using GMOs and the results are horrifying. “A harmless bean protein transferred to peas when tested on mice caused severe inflammation in the lungs and provoked generalized food sensitivities.” (Klein). I too am now wondering if the introduction of GMOs in 1996 is the direct cause of the rise in food allergies amongst children. This is a perfect example of why the development of school lunch policy requires an acute awareness of food and how it is made. The reason I chose this article is that it pertains to school children who may have, dietary preferences that do not pertain to allergies or religious beliefs. There are many students who are aware of GMOs, and do not wish to eat them at all. Unless policies such as the Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act are implemented, students will not be aware they are consuming the very food they wished to avoid. People with food preferences and restrictions for ethical reasons should not be dismissed as petty or picky. This article offers evidence as to how serious our food choices can be, and the implications of being ignorant of what we are eating.